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THE JUDAEAN CULTURAL CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY OF GOODS IN THE EARLY JESUS MOVEMENT

Part V

V. Voluntary Economic Association and the Creation of Economic Security Through Education and Occupational Training in the Essene Fictive Kinship Groups of Ancient Judaea

It is the contention of the present study that the community of goods of Acts 2:44–45, 4:32–5.11 and 6:1–6 cannot be properly interpreted without understanding its context in the extensive development, prior to the Christian era, of the Essene network of voluntarist, economically co-operative community houses in Jerusalem, its immediate environs, and throughout the towns and villages of ancient Judaea. The early Jerusalem community of believers in Jesus drew on the established community forms, social processes and socio-economic expectations which had been developed in the Essene movement over at least the preceding two centuries, becoming culturally embedded in the region. Both movements maintained, through shared, well established communal and legal forms, a social safety net of sufficient breadth and economic strength to secure, by and large, the wellbeing of the poor and vulnerable of Judaeian society. This next part of my study seeks: 1) to depict in greater depth the innovative, securing economic structures which Essenism had created in the region, demonstrating specifically: 2) that these cooperative economic structures secured the lives of children in the region who lacked support in local kinship structures; 3) that poor children who lacked support in local kinship structures received, instead, economic and social security through membership in new fictive kinship structures; 4) that these voluntarily created fictive kinship structures offered educational opportunities to girls and boys, and to young men and young women, the education thus bestowed constituting part of the method of securing the lives of previously unattached children and youth by offering them economically realistic occupational training and education on which to found secure future livelihoods; 5) that indigent elderly, both women and men, also otherwise unsupported in local kinship structures, received economic security through incorporation into the fictive kinship groups of the local community houses, within which they received effective charitable care; 6) that these elderly men and women gave generously, in return, of their wisdom, skill, time and effort in the education of children and youth taken in by the community houses, thereby training up a reciprocally grateful new core membership; and finally 7) that through the fictive kinship alliance created between the supported elderly, children and youth, a ‘reciprocity of the generations’ was founded and perpetuated through which rescued, able-bodied members of the community houses, having themselves attained economically secure adult lives through the largesse enabled by the cooperative economic and social structures of the community house, in turn expended economic resources, time and affection to caring for the elderly, especially when these, in the latter stages of their lives, became infirm and fully dependent upon the mutually covenanted fictive kinship city, town and town and village groups.

1. The Social Innovations of the Essene Movement which facilitated Occupational Training and Education

As is well known to all talmudists, the Rabbinic literature acknowledges the tension between the opportunities for study and concentrated reflection desirable for the would-be scholar and exact observer of Jewish Law, and married family life, replete with its many economic and social obligations to wife and children. The tractate *Kiddushîn* teaches that should a man marry before study, his mind will not be free for study: “With a millstone around his neck, will he be able to occupy himself in Torah study?” (29b). The wealth of Rabbinic references to this theme¹ must have had antecedents over the centuries preceding the codification of the *Mishnah* (c. AD 200). Apparently Hillel (c. 110 BC — c. AD 10), who earned a living for his wife and family as a day-labourer, worked at his trade of woodcutter for only a portion of the day, garnering only the pitifully low daily wage of a *tarpik* (τροπαικός or *victoriatius*, half a *dinar*). He suffered therefore real hardship in order to spend the rest of his day in the House of Study. He was held up as an example by the Rabbis to show that the duty of study fell to the poor man despite his poverty. The poor man who gave poverty as an excuse for not studying (“I was overwhelmed with the need to earn a living”) would be asked at the Divine Judgment: “Were you poorer than Hillel?”²

This part of my study argues that, for around two centuries before the early first century BC, and perhaps longer, the tension, for many poor Jewish male inhabitants of the villages and towns of rural Judaea, who earned their living working long days in agricultural or craft trades, between finding adequate opportunity for study and living a normal economic and social life as husbands who supported wives and children, was keenly felt, and that this tension contributed to remarkable social and economic innovations within the material life of the villages and towns of Judaea. These innovations, which I will summarise under three broad headings, were directed not only towards the adequate subsistence of the whole rural population but also towards the provision of care and educational opportunities for many of the poorest children of the region.

The three broad headings under which I characterise these social and economic innovations are: 1) The development of *very close economic cooperation* amongst some of the village and town populations; 2) The creation of special community-serving *common dwelling places which were both centres for social care and houses of study located in many towns and villages*, in which teaching sessions could begin for those who worked in agricultural occupations from the moment the school began its common meal together after each long working weekday after the independent work of each member in the local economy each long working weekday; and 3) The *temporary delay or permanent renunciation of marriage* aimed at creating daily opportunities for participation in courses of study extending over periods of several years, or even lengthy participation in study over periods of many years. I will first depict these three innovations in outline, before proceeding to offer a detailed social explanation of the path to their development in rural Judaea.

1) *Very close economic cooperation.* The charitable and educational innovation of very close economic cooperation between at least significant sectors of Judaeen village and town populations extended, for a significant proportion of the inhabitants of the region, to complete community of property. These are the many inhabitants of the Judaeen towns and villages who primarily come to the minds of Josephus and Philo when these two writers describe the intensely pious, communitarian lives of the *Essenes*. Within these houses or complexes of buildings many poor Jewish men fully shared their economic resources. We learn much of the practicalities of this Essene community of property from both Josephus and Philo.³ Philo's account of Essene community living is particularly helpful for the thesis of this paper, since it is apparent that the Essene males he described were very poor indeed, seemingly drawn from a class of increasingly impoverished former smallholders resident mainly in the villages and towns of the Judaeen rural scene. These very poor men sought to maintain, and even to increase, their immersion in study and reflection on the Jewish Law and wider, developing Jewish religious traditions of wisdom, apocalyptic and even mysticism by full economic and educational cooperation within their newly innovated, economically cooperative spaces for communal dwelling, social care and study, to which I now turn.

2) *Common dwelling places which were both centres for social care and houses of study.* The newly innovated common life, devoted to study, and also to the social support of the very poor, was focused around a new local institution, the *beth ha-chever* ('House of the Community.') This new institution created amongst the very poor was spread progressively through this era until it could be found by Philo's day in most towns and villages of the region. It is referenced explicitly, around the early to mid second century BCE, in the Essene *Damascus Rule*, which legislates a tax of at least two days' pay per month from villagers who supported its social work amongst needy villagers, especially for those whom the relations of blood kinship no longer afforded material security (CD XIV:12–17).⁴ Philo's account of the Essenes in his tract *That Every Good Man is Free* references a shared dwelling place (*oikia*) or multiple shared dwellings,⁵ dwelling together in clubs (*kata thiasous sunoikein*) and places of study called 'synagogues.'⁶ Philo seems with these descriptions to apply in new ways terms from common vocabulary in an attempt to describe these new and unusual social relationships and spaces.⁷ In his *Apology for the Jews* he writes of these Essenes dwelling together in clubs which ate together (*oikousi... kata thiasous hetairias kai sussitia pepoihmenoi*), combining the vocabulary of the Greco-Roman voluntary associations and clubs with the term for the common meal of Spartan organisation (*sussitia*) to describe this Essene social *novum*. Philo's use of the term *συσσίτια* suggests a comparison with both the rigour and the obligatory, intensely communal character of Spartan training. The *sussitia* of Sparta comprised one of the obligatory features of the system of *ἀγωγή* (*agôgê*) the rigorous physical and social education without which a man could not attain to the Spartan citizenship.⁸

I take the view that the reference in column XIV of the *Damascus Rule* to the *beth-ha-chever* and Philo's descriptions of the Essene common facilities should be read synthetically, and that these references denote essentially the same institution, housed in a single building or a combination of several buildings located close together, perhaps around their own courtyard, in a particular part of a village or town. At these locations in the villages and towns the Essene movement ran its local centres. Associated villagers and town inhabitants lived elsewhere, in their own dwellings, with their own families, in the villages and towns but paid a regular, supportive

contribution to this institution and had access to it for some educational opportunities and forms of study, and some occasions of prayer and worship. The live-in members of this building or building complex, which was both a centre for social care and a house of study, shared their property fully and dwelt together in a common life more intense than that of their other associates in the villages and towns, a common life devoted, as far as was possible for working people, to common life and study.

Since the *Rule of the Community* (1QS) from Qumran clearly emanates from an Essene-related group, it is legitimate at points to allow it to illuminate the life of these village centres, as is arguable and appropriate. I accept that the Essene movement may, as many scholars argue, have experienced divergences over the many years of its history, and may also have known status differentiations between different of its sectors, which nonetheless remained in good standing with each other (e.g. those living with their own families versus those forming together highly socially integrated ‘communes’, or those living in the villages and towns versus those living an isolated and even more specialised type of community life at Qumran). The Essene movement may have been quite variegated and subject to divisions and schism, perhaps into several, if not many, parts and tendencies. However, I would argue that unless scholars allow our various and only occasional sources, which at least relate to a set of groups within Second Temple Judaism sharing many distinctive characteristics, to illuminate each other synthetically, as I allow in this paper, our sources for understanding the Essene movement overall will be unnecessarily dispersed (perhaps ‘silo-ised’, to borrow a current neologism), obscuring important and mutually illuminating connections, and our historical perceptions will suffer detrimental atomisation.

3) *Temporary delay or permanent renunciation of marriage.* Scholars in recent decades have with good justification debated the likelihood of Essene male celibacy, more readily found in the sources by the first generation of Qumran scholarship.⁹ Alternative models have been well argued, such as the possibility that Essene males first realised their duty, according to divine commandment, of producing offspring, only thereafter retiring in later life to a communal life of study without women.¹⁰ I would argue that it is entirely possible that real cases of lifelong male celibacy, the temporary delay of marriage until the fulfilment of a course of study of some two or three years, and departures of men from marriage later in life into men-only communities, or entry of widowers into such communities, may all have occurred and easily co-existed within the overall Essene movement. All would serve the creation of greater opportunities for study, *especially amongst the very poor*, and all are consistent with the data afforded by the sources and would represent antecedents of the opinions of those later Rabbis who expressed concern that married life impeded Torah study.

2. Contrasting Attitudes to the Education of the Poor in Ben Sira and Philo on the Essenes

As a way towards understanding more fully why marriage and family life might, for the very poor, terribly impede study, and how reserve about marriage may be linked with the other two social innovations outlined above, I now ask my readers to reflect on two rather different cases, not so far apart in time in the history of ancient Judaism.

Jesus Ben Sira First, I would like to point to the rather narrow, aristocratic mindset of Ben Sira regarding education. In the early second century BC he made it abundantly, perhaps even offensively, clear, that a poor Jewish man, that is, one who as boy and youth gained only a practical training in one of the agricultural or craft skills which made the physical economy work (38:24–32, 34), would not, because of his lack of education, ever be invited to speak in the company of the ruling elite, nor be allowed ever to contribute to the governance of the people (38:33). Education, the wisdom of the propertied gentleman and scholar, expressed in Greek by the term *paideia*, came through the generous time for leisure, *σχολή* (*scholê*), lavished by wealth upon the super-rich, entirely freed from the need to work for a living:

“The wisdom of the scribe depends on the opportunity of leisure; only the one who has little business can become wise.” (38:24)

Only the wealthy, whose servants performed menial tasks for them, had opportunities as boys and young men to acquire the learning they required to serve the state as high-level scribes, scholars, counsellors, diplomats and judges. The farm worker and the shepherd, the mason, potter and all other artisans

“...are not sought for in the council of the people,
nor do they attain eminence in the public assembly.
They do not sit in the judge’s seat,
Nor do they understand the decisions of the courts;
They cannot expound discipline or judgment,
And they are not found among the rulers.”
(38:33)

Ben Sira’s social position as an educator of the sons of the wealthy and powerful is easily established from his work and has been well understood by scholars.¹¹ Robert Sira demonstrated through the main body of his seminal study of ‘The Social Background of the Wisdom Literature’ that Ben Sira was ‘thoroughly patrician’.¹² We may perceive him as purely an educator of the sons of the super-rich wealth-elite, or somewhat more broadly as an educator of the sons of a fairly narrow and well-off landed and commercial class whose wealth and power fell short of the very narrow ruling class, a nonetheless high stratum of society which we may perhaps, for want of a better expression, term minor nobility (cf. German *Kleinadel*). Such families appear at least, from his writings, to have aspired to gain for their sons social acceptance with the elite and influential positions in Temple and state, where they would serve, rub shoulders with, and perhaps ultimately be absorbed into the super-rich ruling class.

Certainly, Ben Sira expressed an *aristocratic* attitude when he emphasised the necessity of ample leisure-time, *scholê*, for *paideia*. This attitude was expressed, for example, by the key Greek educator Aristotle, for whom democracy was the kind of government ‘when men who do not possess much property but are poor (*aporoï*) are in control of the state’ (*Pol.* 1279b 18–20). For Aristotle, it is the ‘excessively poor’ (*lian aporoï*) who come to depend on grain doles (*Pol.* 1320a 32–34, cf. *tois lian penêsin*, *Pol.* 1271a 30–35). Elsewhere Aristotle emphasises that it is lack of leisure (*scholê*) that characterises the poor, while it is the possession of leisure that qualifies the very rich to rule. When he discusses the Carthaginian view that rulers should possess wealth, Aristotle states that ‘poor’ men would not have the leisure to govern well (*Pol.* 1273a 21–36). Aristotle contrasts the best citizens (*hoi beltistoi*) who ‘are

able to have leisure (*scholadzein*) and do nothing unseemly either as rulers or as private citizens' with the poor. "By the phrase 'do nothing unseemly' he means that the best citizens are not obliged to engage in occupations as artisans, traders or shopkeepers that are unsuitable for the good life. Listing the various classes of common people, as distinguished from the nobles, Aristotle asserts a causal connection between having little property and lacking leisure: they include 'the class which has little property so that they are not able to have leisure' (... Pol. 1291b 17–30)."¹³

The attitude shared by Ben Sira and Aristotle, that only those with wealth so vast that they need devote only scant time to the administration of their property, merit a place amongst rulers, is borne out by all we know of the wealth-elite of the classical and Hellenistic world. The superior wealth and ample leisure-time of the *plousioi*, the *dynatoi*, made possible for them the pursuits of *paideia* and the *symposion*, as well as the cultural and economic benefactions to urban public life which helped express and maintain their absolute power. The ancient wealth-elite constituted a very narrow sliver of the total population, perhaps a very small fraction of the top one per cent; all who fell short of super-rich status in terms of power and wealth, from the destitute to the prosperous, but working, commercial class, counted as the poor (*hoi penetes*). What characterised these 'poor' as a class 'was a lack of *scholē* and hence a need to work for a living.'¹⁴

Philo of Alexandria on the Essenes My second case is the strangely contrasting portrait given to us by Philo of Alexandria, about two centuries later, of the Essenes of the Judaeian countryside as *poor, day-labouring, rurally located philosophers*. These men (Philo insists they were all men¹⁵) dwelt 'in many towns of Judaea, and in many villages in large and numerous societies.'¹⁶ I take Philo's widespread distribution of this type of Essenes across rural Judaea to locate them, in the main, in the traditional Jewish heartland, an east-west band of territory in southern Palestine south of Samaria, reaching into the Beersheba-Arad valley, the biblical Negev, on its southernmost fringe. If the principal area of Essene occupation extended west into the southern coastal plain, the villages and towns where Essene communities may have been located by Philo's day across were perhaps about two hundred and seventy-five. If Essene communities were in the main restricted to the upland band of territory beginning in the west with the Shephelah and extending across to the wilderness, also a possible way to understand Philo's designation of 'Judaea', the number of villages and towns where Essene communities were to be found by Philo's time probably numbered around two hundred.¹⁷

These Essene males, none of whom lived with a wife,¹⁸ were compelled, in their rural locations, to intense, manual labour in the agricultural economy. They seem to have been drawn from the poorest people of the region, amongst whom they lived and worked. These *very* poor seem to have formerly been part of the Judaeian peasant class of subsistence farmers, but to have become dispossessed of any land. In Hebrew they would (thus) be termed and known as *evyônîm*.¹⁹

Philo notes that these Essenes received *wages* on a *daily* basis, which they communalised each evening on returning to their local association: '...for whatever they receive as wages (*epi misthō*) for their day's work is not kept to themselves, but is deposited before them all, in their midst, to be put to common employment...'²⁰ We may deduce that none of Philo's rural Essene males owned any parcels of arable land, nor vineyards, nor flocks to graze on any rough upland commons, as such still existed in the intensely terraced Judaeian uplands. Philo may be read as suggesting that these Essenes of the towns and villages of Judaea demonstrated their exemplary religious

virtuosity through quite deliberate renunciation of property, such that none of them 'allows himself to have any private property, either house or slave or estate or cattle or any of the other things that are amassed and abundantly procured by wealth.'²¹ However, a moment's reflection on possible realities makes clear that these philosophers were not landed gentleman who had voluntarily given up property as had, for example, indeed proverbially²², Crates the Cynic. They had surely not voluntarily turned from propertied ease to arduous, and sometimes painful, labour, deliberately leaving behind secure farmsteads to elect their position of powerless labourers amongst the poorest social strata.

On this point we should not allow ourselves to fall victim to Philo's self-indulgent rhetoric. Philo, indulging his typical enthusiasm for ascetic rigour, makes for effect a virtue out of what was the harsh socioeconomic position of these Essenes within the rural day-labourer class. Perhaps the harshness of this position was indeed ameliorated by the excellence of these Essenes' skills in sowing, planting, herding, beekeeping and crafts, as emphasised by Philo.²³ Their innovation of close, cooperative economic collaboration certainly also helped stave off destitution. Perhaps also, to anticipate the conclusions of my argument below, their struggle for economic survival was made easier by a religiously legitimated decision to avoid the difficult economic burden of providing for a wife and children by temporarily or permanently eschewing marriage. Education, *paideia*, filled the vacuum caused by abandonment of normal family life; but I argue here that desire for sufficient time for education had intentionally created that vacuum. Both economic deprivation *and* the desire for training and education contributed to intensive economic cooperation, and we may envisage that some community members essentially gave up the unequal struggle to provide for a wife and family, as a temporary or permanent choice, while they strive to achieve training, education in the Law, and economic stability. We may even envisage that Essene males' avoidance of family life with wives and children functioned as a population limiting mechanism within the stressed agrarian economy, always subject to overpopulation and land shortage. It is possible that for some the choice of trading the difficult struggle to raise a family for the honoured role of perhaps permanently celibate, educated scribe and sage may have been appealing. We should understand these Essenes' cooperative economic lifestyle as a survival mechanism conceived by skilled, traditionalist subsistence labourers both to preserve both their lives and advance their dignity within Jewish society as a whole. Through it they both realised high religious and educational aims and raised their living conditions to a greater sufficiency of subsistence.

Such communitarian economic cooperation is not the undertaking of a multiple of propertied estate owners. Such landed figures may perhaps, for pleasure, on their own estates and at their self-determined opportunities, try their hand at leading flocks or pottering about with favourite plants and crops (though one somehow doubts that Ben Sira was ever an occasional lover of the practical pleasures of farming). Such gentlemen may even enjoy moments of physical exertion and perhaps somewhat faux camaraderie with their workers, in the joy of getting a harvest in or constrained by the necessity of rescuing a valuable breeding animal or other favourite beast. Such eccentricities might be accompanied in landed gentlemen's minds with the back-to-nature yearning of bucolic verses learned with their tutors. But Philo's claim that a slice of the rural population, in a traditional and stressed agricultural economy, had simply turned its back on real, substantial land ownership, instead preferring arduous and insecure labouring at the bottom of the economic pile on the estates of others, is pure fantasy. It stretches both reality and imagination too

far. Poor farming folk simply do not abandon their parcels of land, the much-coveted basis of their livelihood, certainly not in any large number — unless, at least, a *more* secure economic situation awaits them. Were such a case afforded by joining a local Essene house, we might expect the remnants of much-reduced agricultural possessions to be donated to the local Essene house by older men in return for economic security, or abandoned to kin who still had need of them (perhaps as in the case of the Therapeuts of Egypt described by Philo in his *On the Contemplative Life*.) But such actions do not represent a reckless abandonment of property, without caution and concern for one's own wellbeing and the value of landed property itself, in the pursuit of religious goals, the inclination of Philo's description. Important as it is to read some parts of Philo's account literally for their historical value, it is also important keenly to doubt, at some points, his rhetorical embellishment of the facts of the case.

The poor socioeconomic location of these Essenes within the rural day-labouring class is confirmed by Philo's reference to their hard labour 'from before sunrise' until 'when the sun has almost set', the exhausting full day of the landless farm worker, even through scorching midday summer heat.²⁴ In midsummer the period from sunrise to sunset is over fourteen hours in southern Palestine; these Essenes therefore worked, in the early harvests, very long and arduous days indeed.²⁵ Theirs was, indeed, a working life of such rigour that it might curtail longevity drastically. The harsh working lives of these Essene day-labourers were the consequence of economic necessity, not voluntary renunciation of wealth. We are right not to understand Philo's claims about the athletic virtue of their hard labour²⁶ as implying that these Essenes took to day-labouring out of voluntary choice. They were simply ordinary working folk who set about their labours with trained strength, honesty and commitment, as so many have done in every age and economy.

We find further confirmation of their vulnerable socioeconomic location in Philo's information that these Essenes worked at multiple employments through the day and shrank from no honest work to earn enough to meet their needs. They met 'indispensable needs' by never deferring until the morrow 'an innocent way of getting a livelihood.'²⁷ As we may observe in our current world economy, it is the very poor who, out of difficulty in garnering enough for their basic needs, seek out multiple employments through long working days.

Further proof of the precarious, subsistence economic position of these Essene day-labourers, is found when Philo explains that provisions to meet needs were only purchased once daily wages had been received and brought home to the community: 'Each member of the group, when he has received the day's wages (*ton misthon labontes*) for these different occupations, gives it to the person who has been elected as treasurer. As soon as he receives this money, the treasurer immediately buys what is necessary and provides food in abundance as well as whatever else human life requires.'²⁸ The Mosaic Law demanded that labourers receive their wages at nightfall, when the working day ended (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15), since the labourer's existence was hand-to-mouth, survival depending on what was garnered each day. That the 'communal shopper' of each village and town Essene group waited for the daily income of returning labourers before purchasing food for the evening meal, and other *necessities* ('whatever else is needful [*chreiwdes*] to human life'), reveals the hand-to-mouth existence of very poor labourers.

I have asserted that Philo's Essenes were not formerly wealthy gentlemen, yet that he nonetheless unexpectedly depicted them as *poor, day-labouring, rurally located philosophers*. Philo well understood Greek *paideia*, which he described in

detail in his essay *On the Preliminary Studies*, referring to a curriculum which included music, geometry, grammar, and philosophy. Philosophy included the study of ethics and physics (especially cosmology), themes studied commonly in the Hellenistic schools.²⁹ Philo understood that *paideia* was only available to the sons of the wealthy, whose families paid substantial sums for their education and afforded them the years of free time necessary to pursue their studies.³⁰ Philo regarded philosophy as the pinnacle of education, the ‘true wife’ over against whom other areas of study were mere ‘handmaidens’, her servants.³¹ In describing the rural, labouring Essenes of Judaea, he reflects his formal understanding of the syllabus of Greek education, but insists that these Essenes were nonetheless truly philosophers, philosophers, though, who had made wise choices in restricting the range of their studies:

‘As for philosophy they abandon the logical part to quibbling verbalists as unnecessary for the acquisition of virtue, and the physical to visionary praters as beyond the grasp of human nature, only retaining that part which treats philosophically of the existence of God and the creation of the universe. But the ethical part they study very industriously, taking as their trainers the laws of their fathers, which could not possibly have been conceived by the human soul without divine inspiration.’³²

What are we to make of Philo’s claim that there were within the rural population of Judaea genuine philosophers, philosophers who were, observably, so to speak, on the breadline? Obviously, his depiction of the Essenes could serve his own philosophical viewpoints — of the value of physical rigour and simple diet, of the serviceability for philosophical contemplation of the separation of men from women and the renunciation of sexual desire, of wealth as an ‘indifferent’, neither good nor bad in itself, allowing that there may truly be poor philosophers, and so on.

But was Philo merely *characterising* these Essenes as philosophers in order to press his philosophical claims? Or did he see them as actually having undertaken a genuine, arduous route of lengthy *paideia* to true philosophy, well worth comparing with the best that the Hellenistic world had to offer? Hellenistic *paideia* had a twofold purpose, ‘the process of education that culminates in a young man’s eventually taking his place in society, and the character of the educated person’.³³ An overall reading of Philo’s two accounts suggests that he genuinely understood the Essenes to have realised these principal goals of *paideia* through a process of education and continuing philosophical study. Indeed, he emphasises the role that careful, extended and continuing education in Jewish laws played in their personal and political formation:

‘In these [laws] they are instructed at all other times, but particularly on the seventh days. For that day has been set apart to be kept holy and on it they abstain from all other work and proceed to sacred spots which they call synagogues. There, arranged in rows, the younger below the elder, they sit decorously as befits the occasion with attentive ears. Then one takes the books and reads aloud and another of especial proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood. For most of their philosophical study takes the form of allegory, and in this they emulate the tradition of the past. They are trained in piety, holiness, justice, domestic and civil conduct, knowledge of what is truly good, or evil, or indifferent, and how to choose what they

should and avoid the opposite, taking for their defining standards these three, love of God, love of virtue, love of humankind.’³⁴

After this Philo goes on to describe the practical arrangements of these Essenes’ communal life together as expressive of their philosophical education,³⁵ rounding off by returning to describe these Essenes as the ‘athletes of virtue free from the pedantry of Greek wordiness’.³⁶ There are, of course, moments in the above cited passage when Philo’s own preferences adjust what he is describing to his own views, as when he perhaps refers to Essene *peshet* exegesis as allegory.³⁷ But even when we allow for such rhetorical adjustment, what is striking in social terms in Philo’s description, from the point of view of comparison with Hellenistic *paideia*, is the reality of a genuine educational process of some sophistication happening in the economic stratum of society where we should least expect it, *amongst the very poor*. Put simply, these poor Jewish males were, in an entirely real sense, receiving a real, socially valuable and empowering education quite beyond what we might expect of those low down the economic scale. These men had clearly acquired the skills needed to make a living in the agricultural scene, and had it seems learned them very well — there is no reason to doubt that. Agricultural workers well understand the advantages of skill, speed and efficiency in their work, which is judged both on its quality and the daily quantities they produce. But these Essenes also aspired to and were able to pursue a real education in the understanding of Jewish laws and literary texts of a sophisticated kind, an achievement we would not naturally anticipate of those in the poorest economic stratum.

If my point is doubted, its weight may be shown by contrasting Ben Sira’s dissertation on the ‘ideal scribe’ with how positively Philo writes about these Essenes’ legal and ethical education. Certainly, these Essene men understood the divine laws, and heard sophisticated expositions of difficult points and cases. They could undertake what Ben Sira held impossible for poor craftsmen and agricultural labourers. In fact, their capacities could have enabled them to be called upon to act effectively as judges in the villages and towns of Judaea; *pace* Ben Sira they could understand court decisions, explain the reasoning behind acquittals and dispensed punishments, and be called upon to liaise between centralised power and local communities as sophisticated local administrators, village and town elders of repute. In this regard we should bear in mind Herod the Great’s public patronage, over roughly the second half his reign, of the Essene movement. Herod’s patronage had, I would suggest, called Essene judges into precisely such roles as Herod orchestrated his anti-Hasmonean establishment to exclude, to his advantage, the influence of the competing and highly honoured former ruling dynasty.³⁸ In fact, what Ben Sira thought ridiculous appears indeed to have happened within two centuries of his death: poor men could receive the solid education in Jewish scriptures and laws which would equip the best of them, when chosen, to serve the elite in high legal and administrative positions. I suspect the brightest and best of these ‘poor Jewish boys’ did indeed rise to compete with the children of the elite in the public arena of administration and debate in Jerusalem under Herod — and won.

How had this come about? We can approach a solution by taking a lead from Ben Sira, who insisted that education required opportunity of leisure. But we must adjust his conceptuality somewhat, to the availability of time for study created through very efficient timetabling, and also through the abandonment of normal family life. How did these poor Jewish men find time for study, though working long and arduous days in the fields of others? Philo tells us that they studied on the

Sabbaths, but also ‘at all other times.’³⁹ Since during the week they laboured, as we have seen, from sunrise to sunset,⁴⁰ we may deduce that time for study was probably found by the holding of readings and exposition which accompanied the evening meal,⁴¹ and in continuing communal study during the first hours of every night of the year, probably directly following the meal, when study, worship and (I suggest) finally prayer continued with college-like organisation and efficiency.

I suggest that the evening after the meal of the local Essene communities continued thus, the whole community forgoing sleep for three to four hours in the first watch of the night in order to study, since we find such a nightly pattern legislated in the *Rule of the Community* from Qumran,⁴² a document which obviously emanated from a related group of Essene religious virtuosi. The passage is likely to have found analogy or direct expression in the regular community life of the small communities of Essenes in the towns and villages of Judaea described by Philo, since it is found in a document which was still being copied throughout Philo’s lifetime⁴³ and legislated the constitution of groups of men in virtuoso religious communities as small as ten in number. This was the number of the *minyán* (the quorum for communal worship) of later Judaism which we may rightly assume already applied in the village and small town Essene communities.⁴⁴ The passage connects community discussion, the formal communal meal and study for a third of the night in a way which, I suggest, paralleled the daily round of the evening meal (after a working day) and progress to night-time study amongst Philo’s village and town Essenes:

“Wherever there are ten men of the Council of the community there shall not lack a priest among them. And they shall all sit before him according to their rank and shall be asked their counsel in all things in that order. And when the table has been prepared for eating, and the new wine for drinking, the priest shall be the first to stretch out his hand to bless the first fruits of the bread and wine. And where the ten are, there shall never lack a man among them who shall study the law continuously, day and night, concerning the right conduct of a man with his companion. And the congregation shall watch in community for a third of every night of the year, to read the book and to study the law and to bless together.”⁴⁵

The required continual (day-and-night) rotational study of the law may have been undertaken in the town and village communities by shifts occupied by any community officer(s)⁴⁶ and older men⁴⁷ who did not leave the community house⁴⁸ to work in the fields, and perhaps also by particularly talented students who were thought destined for greater things in life (i.e. there may have been Essene part-day ‘scholarships for study’).

These poor Jewish men gained an education by joining together in economically cooperative communities which offered education by creating a rigorous daily timetable for evening study after work and continued with a day of study on the Sabbaths. Yet the price they paid for education was even harsher than this; for, as is readily apparent, such a daily and weekly regime of study left no time over for family life with wife and children, and of course, as we have seen, these Essenes did not live with wives nor raise children of their own. Perhaps some or more had done so before joining such a community. Certainly, after having joined this type of Jewish virtuoso religious community, on a permanent or perhaps even temporary basis, they had while members no time for ordinary family life.

These men, clearly, made difficult sacrifices to gain their education; even in our richer age, prolonged education typically does involve students in choices which

disrupt the pattern of family life, perhaps by going away to college and delaying marriage until after graduation. As early as the book of Proverbs, we can tell that Jewish education may have involved for better-off young men, studying in Jerusalem's wisdom schools, the delaying of marriage. It is not without reason that the last chapter of the book (Proverbs 31), which I take to be the last lesson of a course of study, looks forward to the young man's coming opportunity for marriage and gives advice on what kind of woman will make the best wife for the man of influence.

3. Essene Community Forms as a Product of Jewish Impoverishment in the Later Post-exilic Period

The harsh route to education taken by the Essenes described by Philo reflects the progressive impoverishment of the Jewish people through the post-exilic period. As early as the fifth century BC events described by Nehemiah, we find an agrarian society facing the typical struggles of a growing population with access only to limited agricultural resources and burdened by payment of taxes to an overlord power. Short of food and money, the poor of Jewish society mortgaged their fields, took on unpayable debts, and sold children into unpleasant and worse service in great houses. Nehemiah claims to have solved the early social problems of *Yehud* with a debt amnesty (Nehemiah 5). Renewed commitment to the protective legislation of traditional Israelite law, expressed in covenant renewal (cf. Nehemiah 9), left its mark in the final formation of the Torah, with its eternal resistance to interest on debt and alienation of land, and general incription of a free peasantry's rights.⁴⁹

However, the ideal vision of the Jewish Law could not to be supported in practice. Under the yet more rapacious Macedonian/Greek empires the author of Ecclesiastes (c. 250 BC) sank into despair. His course of instruction is full of tears, toil, despair at injustice and resignation at the progressive deprivation of the Jewish 'middle.' Educated Jewish families of formerly significant wealth and status, who previously could have hoped for positions of social power and influence, could not maintain the influence of their rank, and were able neither to preserve themselves from a harsh, universal burden of heavy service to their overlords nor to save the poor from seemingly limitless oppression (5:8–10). The best that the youths he educated could hope for was to enjoy their constant work and the private pleasures of domestic life (9:9).⁵⁰ Towards the end of the third century BC, the ruthless, super-rich tax-farmer Joseph son of Tobiah demonstrated the rapacity of Greek colonial rule through his murderous tax-drives, during which he even slaughtered recalcitrant sections of the town 'elder' class, despatching their property to the king in Egypt.⁵¹ Early in the second century BC, as we have seen, Ben Sira spoke contemptuously of the agricultural labouring and artisan class, whom he thought should make no contribution to the running of the state. The sharpening, extreme social bifurcation between the super-rich elite and the progressively dispossessed peasantry is attested late in the second century BC by the woes pronounced in sections of the Enoch literature against the self-indulgent, land-robbing governing class, whose wealth would be unable to save them in God's great coming judgement.⁵²

The Poor Student of 4QInstruction

A document which aids our understand of the development, through this period of severe social fragmentation, to Philo's unusual, rurally located and poor philosopher-

Essenes, is the wisdom work found at Qumran now formally known as 4QInstruction and also commonly referred to as *Musar leMevin*, “Instruction to a student”. While the manuscripts date from the around the middle of the first century BC to the early first century AD, the composition of this text has been placed by some scholars in the late third century BC, i.e. roughly coincident with the severe tax-farming of Joseph son of Tobias, and by others a little later, in the first quarter of the second century BC, especially on the grounds of a noticeable reflection of early Jewish apocalyptic.⁵³ It is usually classified as ‘pre-sectarian’ by those scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls who utilise this proposed classification boundary;⁵⁴ by it they mean prior to the formation of the *yachadh* out of the Essene movement. Many scholars regard the *yachadh* as coterminous with ‘Qumran community’, though I would agree with Torleif Elgvin that the *yachadh* was a wider social entity,⁵⁵ and would suggest it was a cooperative movement probably embracing at least some sectors of the village and town Essenes of rural Judaea. For the purposes of my argument, either dating works well, though I support the latter.

I concur with the frequent and wise scholarly assessment that the addressee of 4QInstruction is regularly a farmer or artisan of relatively tenuous economic position, who was ‘often forced to borrow’ (cf. 4Q417 2 I 21-24), one in precarious circumstances who ‘could easily be at the mercy of his work supervisor’ (cf. 4Q216 2 ii 13–14). The *Sitz im Leben* of this work is quite different from the wealthy wisdom school setting in which Ben Sira trained the wealthy sons of the Jerusalem elite; hence it makes no reference to right conduct before the powerful at formal banquets.⁵⁶

What is, of course, most important for my argument is that 4QInstruction points to a process of formal education amongst a relatively poor stratum of Judaeian rural society. It is a distinguishing feature of 4QInstruction amongst the Jewish wisdom literature that the addressee is regularly told ‘You are poor [*rash/râsh* or *evyôn*]...’ (4Q215 6 2; 4Q416 2 ii 20; 4Q416 iii 2, 8, 12, 19; 4Q418 177 5). I disagree with Tigchelaar’s (philologically possible) suggestion that these addresses should be understood as conditionals (i.e. supplied with opening ‘If’ in English translation),⁵⁷ since the work’s frequent attention to poverty, with its problems, temptations, struggles and hard choices, suggests a situation of real impoverishment. Both teacher and student are probably reduced to a subsistence level or worse. Nonetheless, to taint the soul by avoiding the consequences of economic deprivation through any dishonest act in a matter of property (such as theft or breach of trust concerning a deposit, etc.) is presented as the nemesis of existence. God’s coming judgement upon present economic dislocation meant that the faithful must be scrupulous to keep far from their souls any stain of dishonest dealings in property (cf. Acts 5.1-11).

It is precisely the hard choices reflected in 4QInstruction that point forward to the developments we find amongst Philo’s village and town Essenes about two centuries later. Amongst these, as we have seen, normal family life was abandoned for the sake of education, education only made possible by the radical creation of entirely cooperative economic structures which maintained all members at viable subsistence and a communal form of living amongst members so spatially close that education could be immediately and efficiently provided from the moment a shared meal was served at the end of each working day.

The teacher of 4QInstruction fully understood the challenge posed, by the student’s economic poverty, to his desire and duty perfectly to know and obey God’s Law: ‘You are poor. Do not say: I am poor, I cannot become wise. Bend your shoulder to all discipline’ (4Q416 2 iii 12–13) Here the teacher tells the poor Jewish man that full education in Jewish wisdom and law, what Philo presents as perfect

paideia, is truly possible for him, and perhaps anticipates the extraordinary rigour of Essene discipline, which led Josephus to compare the deportment and frugal clothing of the Essenes known to him with that of children under rigorous control.⁵⁸ This teacher chose to discuss the challenge of poverty to feasibly well-provided for marriage and child-rearing with his introduction ‘You have taken a wife in your poverty...’ (4Q416 2 iii 20). Certainly, his religious heirs over the succeeding generations who, I suggest, faced increasingly harsh economic conditions in rural Judaea, might soon advise that time be made for study, leading to perfect obedience, by restraint in procreating children. This would mean less time would be needed for garnering wages, or slender wages could be made to stretch to sufficient or better subsistence. Such teachers might even counsel permanent or temporary celibacy (i.e. delay of marriage or the turn to a life apart from one’s wife after children had been raised) to facilitate study in straitened economic circumstances. We may compare how Jesus in the same era, roughly contemporary with Philo’s account proposed that celibacy was a gift that those who received should willingly accept (Matthew 19.10-12).

This teacher strikingly recast the fifth commandment (Exodus 20.12; Deuteronomy 5.16), one of Moses’ revered primary ten, to stress that limited material means did not excuse the support of parents in their old age: ‘Honour your father in your poverty, and your mother in your low estate...’ (4Q416 2 iii 15–16). Jesus’ refusal to allow the legal fictions of the Pharisees to circumvent material care for parents and other social obligations, sullyng the human heart (Mark 7.1-16), expressed similar thinking.

In 4QInstruction, therefore, we find advocated a personal restriction and discipline for the sake of education and religious obedience, an early stage of the trajectory which would soon produce the cooperative economic and ascetic strategies of the Essene movement. It is a text of striking contrasts with Ben Sira, the aristocrat who denied that poor Jewish men could aspire to rise beyond above the social level of farm workers and artisans. The development witnessed by 4QInstruction led succeeding generations, through the voluntary embrace of frugality, comprehensive economic cooperation, delay or withdrawal from marriage later in life, or even lifelong celibacy, to Philo’s town and village Essene communities, in which poor Jewish boys and youths could, in spite of their humble origins, receive and aspire to reap the social and spiritual benefits of *paideia*.

4. Poor Children Educated in the Essene Village and Town Community Houses

If we search the Jewish scriptures for models of education, we find: the ‘son of the prophet’ model, as when Elisha leaves his parental farmstead for education and discipleship to Elijah (1 Kings 19:19–21); the wisdom schools of the monarchic and later periods, which educated the sons of the well-off for their roles in government (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ben Sira); the model of education in royal schools under the patronage of the foreign ruler, as with the young men Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who received new names (Daniel 1); and the model of the gift of a child to a holy place, as when Hannah dedicates Samuel to God at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1). Three of these models (i.e. all but the wisdom schools of Jerusalem) involved *the long-term separation of the pupil from family for training and education*.

The example of the gift of Samuel into religious training as a child may help us form an imaginative picture of how poor children may have been given into the care of the village and town Essene communities described by Philo, for, given the

stressed agrarian economy of rural Judaea, it is entirely possible that the poorest families gave children into the care of the Essene communities to ensure their survival. Of course, this will have been accompanied with the understanding that to give a child was a pious act, and that the child's education would give it an honoured role in society beyond what its birth family could offer. It is entirely plausible that the Essene communities described by Philo in this way anticipated the medieval Christian practice of giving children to monasteries.⁵⁹ Child oblates (*pueri/puellae oblati/ae*) in the century and a half following the writing of the *Rule of St. Benedict* (AD 516) were as young as seven years old.⁶⁰ Their families might hope that their prayers would benefit their relatives, and that, benefiting from the education and care offered by the monasteries, they would have good careers.⁶¹ By the time of Philo's writing, it is apparent that the Essene communities of rural Judaea had been adopting and offering education, food and board and practical training to children on the rural scene for around two centuries or more. This, of course, will have meant that numerous local families who had had to turn to the local Essene community for support in this way when unable to feed all their children well will have held the Essene houses in high esteem, and would probably have entered a tertiary association with these houses, offering what contribution they could to the upkeep of its good works. This would have represented the natural and honourable reciprocal response, gratitude expressed in gift-giving and political support which will have both strengthened the local Essene houses economically and in reputation. We may be right to deduce that, because of a prolonged social phenomenon of the adoption and education of needy local poor children and, in effect, the securing of support at subsistence level whenever villagers and town-dwellers fell into need, the Essene movement became over these two centuries the dominant religious force of the towns and villages of rural Judaea.

It is quite likely that we see, in Josephus' statement concerning Essene adoption and training of the children of others, a social process aimed at education by separation from blood kin and incorporation into the fictive family of an educating institution. Josephus writes that the 'Essenes... adopt the children of others while yet pliable and easily disciplined, and regard them as their own kin and shape them in accordance with their own principles,' expressly connecting adoption with the training and moulding which are the goals of education. We should read this statement from Josephus, following the position I have argued above, synthetically with statements from other ancient sources which give us information about the treatment of children by the Essenes, to round out our understanding of the educational realities of the village institution of the *beth ha-chever*, the Essene 'house of the community' of CD XIV.12–17. In this text we find reference to two categories of children from the villages and towns who, on my view, were taken into the local *beth ha-chever*.

The 'youth who has no teacher' (XIV.16) was to be supported as part of the work of the *beth ha-chever*. It is well known that Jewish youths would typically be educated in practical skills by their fathers,⁶² and we may assume, failing the presence of a father, uncle, brother or other male kin would normally train up a youth in a family trade. So here we have to do with a young male whose familial blood kinship connections in the village, town or general area offered no opportunity to learn a trade by which he could make a good and honest living. Such youths might naturally be forced to take to the road to find an occupation in menial work in the coastal ports, perhaps on a merchant's ship or in as a servant to the overlord military presence, or might fall in with bandit groups who sought to prey on merchant trains as they traveled through rugged passes, retreating to mountain hideouts. The *beth ha-chever*

in the Judaeen village or town offered them the charitable support of the contributions of Essene associates in the local population and of the local communally living Essenes through whom they would also receive education in useful agricultural or craft skills and Torah as the adoptees and *fictive kin* of a new, surrogate family. Hence we find that Philo observes that the older Essene men who dwelt in the village's Essene community were piously cared for by younger men — who were, we may assume, those youths the older men of the community had previously saved from destitution and educated: 'The old men too even if they are childless are treated as parents of a not merely numerous but very filial family... as a duty voluntarily and deliberately accepted rather than enforced by nature [i.e. not enforced by the traditional obligations of blood descent]'⁶³

We should similarly identify the provision made through the charitable work of the *beth ha-chever* of the village for the 'girl who has no redeemer' (CD XIV.16) as an adoptee largely analogous to those male adoptees mentioned by Josephus. We therefore need to hypothesise some form of nurture of girls of the vicinity who found no social security through the traditional blood kinship institution of the *go'el* (kinsman-redeemer). I would suggest this involved the following factors. First, we probably have to hypothesise older women who would be prepared to undertake such nurture at or close by the *beth ha-chever*. These would most likely be widows who were themselves equally cast upon the support of the village care-house, and we may assume that care for such when they received no provision through blood kin fell under the closing rubric of the passage we have cited from CD XIV: 'all the works of the community (XIV.16). Such cases would require investigation since, of course, maintenance of widows fell in the first instance to their offspring or other relatives. Only when such sources of nurture failed, would the *beth ha-chever* step in to help. But in such cases reciprocal duties were probably expected of supported widows, and I propose that primary amongst these would be care for girls who also found no support from their blood kin. Again, the *beth ha-chever* features as a fictive kinship group, functioning as the social supporter of last resort in the villages and towns of Judaea.

5. The 'Mothers of the Community' (4Q270 I 13–14) as Nurturers and Educators and the Three-Year Education of Girls and Young women in the Essene Community Houses of Judaea

We should also be prepared to assume that the girls taken in by such women were provided with accommodation, care and education in a house probably close to the central facility, but which offered a degree of modesty by some physical separation. A portion of the penal code of the *Damascus Rule* prescribes a greater penalty for dishonouring the 'fathers' of the community than for dishonouring the 'mothers' of the community. It offers the reason for the lesser penalty in the case of the 'mothers' that (in the CD-type 'camps') with them (the 'mothers') there is no 'mingling' 'in the midst of the congregation' (4Q270 I 13–14). I take this as a probable indication that the facility occupied by the older women (and their charges) was physically separated, by a distance dictated by modesty. It may also not have been, perhaps, so fully integrated, economically, into the male-dominated central community facility. We should rightly assume that here girls received, from supported village widows, education in both whatever aspects of legal and religious tradition were thought appropriate as well as the skills which equipped them to be in future productive wives, i.e. spinning, weaving, making clothes, food preparation and the

many other skills by which the internal fabric of a household was maintained. This training seems to have lasted three years, and is referenced by Josephus, though he describes it with a perhaps unexpected twist. Josephus states, after describing the Essene men who live apart from women, that ‘There is another order of Essenes, which, while at one with the rest in its mode of life, customs, and regulations, differs from them in its views on marriage. They think that those who decline to marry cut off the chief function of life, the propagation of the race... They give their wives, however, a three years’ probation, and only marry them after they have by three periods of purification given proof of fecundity.’⁶⁴ I deduce that we are here reading about the rescue of village or town girls who would otherwise have received no support, since their blood kinship did not offer this. These were girls who, in the Essene movement’s traditional social understanding, were best provided for by training which enabled them successfully to enter marriage. Such was, after all, how the traditional Israelite/Jewish ‘kinsman-redeemer’ acted to protect and support kinswomen who were otherwise at risk of destitution. Marriage partners would be found for them when they had received a course of legal and practical training so as to meet the expectations of men within the Essene movement who had no wives and were interested to marry — perhaps themselves often men who had delayed marriage in order to undertake an equivalent course of study and training of the same or similar duration. I note that not only did Josephus refer to candidacy to the Essene movement lasting three years, but that he also claimed in his *Vita* (§2) himself to have spent three years with the wilderness teacher Banus as well. It seems that a period of three years was the common duration of training in the hands of the Judaeen ascetics of the era; I note too that the chronology of the Gospel of John, ranged over three (or possibly four⁶⁵) Passovers, also implies that Jesus training his disciples for perhaps somewhat under, perhaps somewhat over, three years. The expectation was that a girl needed at least three years training in religious and legal tradition and practical skills to make a suitable wife. Josephus conceptualises this as a testing of the wife through a probationary period of examination (*dokimadzontes*) over three years. Indeed, most education of value involves the testing of pupils, apprentices and students in the skills taught. Josephus highlights the aspect of ‘testing’, but it is equally true to say that these girls and young women received *education* through the village *beth ha-chever*.

¹ “The Rabbis taught: If one must study and is about to marry, he studies first and marries later. But if he cannot do without a wife, he marries first, and then he studies. Rab Yehuda said in the name of Samuel: The law is that he marries first and studies later. Said Rabbi Yohanan: What? With a stone around his neck he can study the law?” (Babylonian Talmud *Kiddushin* 29b)

² For the sources of these traditions see Yitzhak Buxbaum, *The Life and Teachings of Hillel* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2008), pp. 17–18 and 305–306. Cf. on prices and the harshness of life for subsistence workers cf. Fritz Moritz Heichelheim, ‘Roman Syria’, in Tenney Frank (ed.), *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome, Vol. IV, Africa, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), pp. 121–257, see pp. 146 and 180; record of Hillel’s wage is found at *bablî Yoma* 35b.

³ On the lives lived in common dwelling places and community of property, by the Essene all-male communities who lived without wives, see Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.8.2–10 and 13, §§120–150 and 160–161; idem *Jewish Antiquities*, 18.1.5 §§20–21; Philo, *That every good man is free*, 12 §§76–79, 84–87; idem *Apology for the Jews (=Hypothetica)*, 11.4–14.

⁴ “And this is the rule of the Many, to provide for all their needs: the wages (13) of at least two days each month they shall place into the hands of the Overseer and of the judges. (14) From it they shall give to the injured and with it they shall strengthen the hand of the needy and the poor, and the elder (15) who is bowed down, and to the afflicted and to the prisoner of a foreign people, and to the girl who (16) has no redeemer, and to the youth who has no teacher, and for all the works of the community, and (17) the house of the community (*beth-hacheber*) shall not be deprived of it means.” (CD XIV.12–17)

⁵ *That every good man is free*, 12 §85.

⁶ *That every good man is free*, 12 §81.

⁷ For an extensive comparison of the social pattern reflected in the Qumran materials and the guilds and religious clubs of the Hellenistic-Roman period, see Moshe Weinfeld, *The Organisational Pattern and Penal Code of the Qumran Sect* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

⁸ See Stephen J. Hodkinson and Antony J. S. Spawforth, art. ‘agoge’, in Simon Hornblower, Antony J. S. Spawforth and Esther Eidinow (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 40. Only the firstborn male sons of the ruling houses were excepted. Further Duncan B. Campbell, *Spartan Warrior 735–331 BC* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2012), pp. 11–16 and 18.

⁹ Cf. Paul Heger, ‘Celibacy in Qumran — Hellenistic Fiction or Reality? Qumran’s Attitude Towards Sex’, *Revue de Qumran*, 26.1 (101) (2013), pp. 53–90, who offers a full survey of current opinion, and is himself entirely sceptical of any practice of celibacy at the Qumran site.

¹⁰ This has recently been well argued by Joan E. Taylor, *The Essene, The Scrolls and the Dead Sea* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 41–44; see also on marriage and celibacy in the other accounts of the Essenes pp. 68–73, 185–187 and 197. She emphasises that Philo stresses the maturity and elderliness of the Essene men (*Apology for the Jews*, 11.1, 3, 7) and notes that ‘even if the older men, however, happen to be childless’, they are cared for when sick as if they were the fathers of others in the community (11.13). Cf. also Taylor’s article ‘The Classical Sources on the Essenes’ in Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 173–199, see especially 176.

¹¹ John Joseph Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), see chapter ‘Ben Sira as Social Critic’, especially pp. 29–32; see further Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilisation and the Jews* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1959).

¹² Robert Gordis, ‘The Social Background of the Wisdom Literature’, in his *Poets, Prophets and Sages: Essays in Biblical Interpretation* (Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 160–197, quotation from p. 190, n. 8. Gordis’ study was originally published in the Hebrew Union College Annual, 18 (1944), pp. 77–118.

¹³ Peter John Rhodes, *Athenian Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 100.

¹⁴ David M. Pritchard, ‘Athens’, in W. Martin Bloomer (ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Education* (Chisester: Wiley-Blackwell: 2015), pp. 112–122, here p. 114.

¹⁵ *Apology for the Jews* (=Hypothetica), 11.3 and 14–17 (with obviously exaggerating rhetoric); all those Philo calls Essenes in *That every good man is free* are males.

¹⁶ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.1.

¹⁷ I offer some justification for this estimate in ‘The New Covenant in Southern Palestine at the Arrest of Jesus’ in James R. Davila, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Post-Biblical Judaism and Early Christianity (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah XLVI*, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 90–116. In respect of the location of the Essenes in rural Judaea, rather than across the whole of Palestine, it is important to give greater weight to Philo’s reference to Judaea than to Josephus’ lack of reference to Judaea. This is because Josephus was writing after the Jewish revolt of CE 66–70, when much dispersion of population away from the Jerusalem region will have occurred in connection with the Roman march southwards and the long siege of Jerusalem itself. For further comments on this see Brian J. Capper, ‘Jesus and the Essene Community Houses of Judaea’, in James H. Charlesworth (ed.) *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), pp. 473–474. My analysis has been supported by Timothy J. Ling, *The Fourth Gospel and the Judaeian Poor* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 94 n. 185.

¹⁸ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.14; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.1.5 §§20–21 (‘...they hold their possessions in common...the men [*andres*] who practise this way of life number over four thousand. They do not bring wives into the community...’); Philo, *That every good man is free*, §75 (‘In Palestinian Syria... more than four thousand in number...’).

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. G. J. Botterweck, article *evyôn*, in *idem* and Helmer Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 27–41.

²⁰ *That every good man is free*, §86.

²¹ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.4

²² For the various competing accounts of Crates’ renunciation of property (perhaps given to the citizens of Thebes or cast into the sea with the manumission formula “Crates sets Crates free”, see Diogenes Laertius, 6 §§87–88. On ‘conversion to philosophy’ in the Greek tradition see Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004), pp. 27–30.

²³ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.8–9

²⁴ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.6, cf. on the length of the labourer’s working day bBM 83b, bYoma 28b and Matthew 20:1–16.

²⁵ See the tabulation of sunrise and sunset times in Jerusalem at: <http://www.timeanddate.com/sun/israel/jerusalem>

²⁶ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.6–7.

²⁷ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.9.

²⁸ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.10–11.

²⁹ Cf. Leo G. Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) pp. 74–75, who cites D. Kah and P. Scholz, *Hellenistische Gymnasion* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004)

³⁰ *Spec.* 2.230; *Prob.* 2.44–46; *Congr.* 74–76.

³¹ *Congr.* 74–76.

³² *That every good man is free*, §80.

³³ Leo G. Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus*, p. 74.

³⁴ *That every good man is free*, §§81–83.

³⁵ *That every good man is free*, §§84–87.

³⁶ *That every good man is free*, §88

³⁷ For examples of the possible proximity of Qumran Peshet exegesis to Philo’s employment of allegorical interpretation see e.g. Menahem Kister, ‘A Common

Heritage: Biblical Interpretation at Qumran and Its Implications’, in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Studies on the Text of the Desert of Judah 28, Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 101–111, who concludes from his study of several cases: ‘It is interesting to observe that in these exegetical allegories a common interpretative technique is applied to the same verses by different authorities (Qumran, Philo and the rabbinic literature). These allegorical interpretations... can be designated “spiritual allegory,” of which Hellenistic Jewish writers such as Philo are so fond. Allegorical interpretations of this sort were preserved in Qumran only because they had become part of the sectarian “historical-eschatological allegory” of the pesher-exegesis.’

³⁸ See especially Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15.10.4–5 §§ 372–379; further Ernst Bammel, “Sadduzäer und Sadokiden”, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 55(1979), pp. 107–115; Brian J. Capper. “‘With the Oldest Monks...’ Light from Essene History on the Career of the Beloved Disciple?”, *JTS* 49 (1998), 1–55, see 26–36, and *idem* ‘John, Qumran and Virtuoso Religion’, in Mary L. Coloe and Tom Thatcher (eds.), *John, Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Sixty Years of Discovery and Debate* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), pp. 93–116, see especially pp. 101–102.

³⁹ *That every good man is free*, §81.

⁴⁰ *Apology for the Jews*, 11.6.

⁴¹ Cf. how reading and exposition accompany the meals of the therapeutae of Engypt also described by Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa*, §§75–77.

⁴² See further my article “The Holy Congregation in Jerusalem”, in Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Vol. 1, pp. 369–370.

⁴³ Different recensions are palaeographically dated from between c. 125 BC to c. 50 AD, i.e. the last copies we have are dated to around the time of Philo’s death c. 45–50 AD.

⁴⁴ Josephus refers to the submission of the individual to the rule of his peer-group of ten, *Jewish War*, 2.8.9 §146, clearly referring to the minimum size of the Essene communities, which he knew could be found ‘in every town, 2.8.4 §124; the number ten is a figure for social organisation at 1Q28a I.13–15, 27–II.1 and 1QM IV.3–6.

⁴⁵ 1QS 6:3–7 Here I follow for convenience the accurate but easy-readable translation of Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (), pp. ; for a more literal translation with critical apparatus also especially James H. Charlesworth (ed.) *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English translations*, Vol. 1, *Rule of the Community and Related Documents* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), pp. 26–27.

⁴⁶ *Apology for the Jews* (=Hypothetica) 11.10.

⁴⁷ Cf. Philo’s emphasis on community care for elderly, and we should assume frail, older men at *Apology for the Jews* (=Hypothetica) 11.13 and *That every good man is free*, §87.

⁴⁸ Cf. the reference we find to the ‘house of the community at CD XIV:12–17.

⁴⁹ Deuteronomy 15:1–11 (‘the year for cancelling debts’); Leviticus 25:8–54 (jubilee); Exodus 22:25 (prohibition of interest when the poor borrow); cf. Leviticus 25:35–38; Deuteronomy 23:19–20; Exodus 22:26–27 (the cloak of a neighbour is not to be kept as a pledge for debt overnight); Exodus 20:8–11; 23:12 (a day a week of rest for humans and animals); Exodus 20: 15–16 and Deuteronomy 24:7 (prohibition of kidnapping for slavery, not simply stealing); Exodus 21:16 and Deuteronomy 24:7

(kidnapping a capital crime); Prohibition of scheming to obtain the land of others: Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21 (*bayith*, ‘house’, originally referred to the household and its supporting land, i.e. the farmstead and all its goods and occupants); Exodus 23:6–8 (Judges may not be induced by bribes, i.e. to remove land from the powerless and award it the wealthy to further expand their landholdings); Leviticus 19:13 and Deuteronomy 24:14–15 (the day labourer is to receive his wage at nightfall). See also Exodus 21:2–11 and Deuteronomy 15:12–18 on the freeing and generous supply of the bondservant are time has been served). All were granted equality before the Law: killing of slaves was to be punished and seriously injured slaves were to be set free, Exodus 21:20, 26–27.

⁵⁰ Ecclesiastes 5:10–11; 3:1–10, 16, 22; 4:1–4, 8; 5:12, and 6:7 refer to tears, toil, injustice and the meagre diet of the labourer. See the persuasive social analysis of Frank Crüsemann, ‘The unchangeable world: The “crisis of wisdom” in Koheleth’, in Willy Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann (eds.), *God of the Lowly: Socio-Historical Interpretations of the Bible* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis; 1984), pp. 57–77.

⁵¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12.4.2–5 §§160–185.

⁵² Cf. 1 Enoch 91–92; 95:7; 96:3–8; 97:8–11; 98:1–2; 99:11–15; 100:6–7; 107.

⁵³ Cf. Torleif Elgvin, ‘Priestly Sages? The Milieus of Origin of 4QMysteries and 4QInstruction,’ in G. Stirling and J. J. Collins (eds.), *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center, 20–22 May 2001* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 67–87.

⁵⁴ I wonder myself if it is not a little unsophisticated from a sociological viewpoint, lacking a fully worked out definition of what is meant by a ‘sect’ and somewhat unaware of the overlap between the social types of the sect and the virtuoso religious group understood as a religious order still maintaining a connection with the wider community. Cf. my piece on ‘John, Qumran and Virtuoso Religion’.

⁵⁵ Cf. Torleif Elgvin, ‘The *Yahad* is more than Qumran’, in Gabriele Boccaccini et al. (eds.), *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 273–279.

⁵⁶ Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 228; cf. his full treatment of these questions, pp. 127–167 and 228–232.

⁵⁷ Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, ‘The Addressees of 4QInstruction’, in D. Falk et al. (eds.), *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran: Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organisation for Qumran Studies, Oslo 1998* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 62–75; contrast correctly Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, p. 149.

⁵⁸ Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2 §126.

⁵⁹ See Mayke De Jong, *In Samuel’s Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (*Studies in Intellectual History* 12, Leiden: Brill, 1996; DeGregorio, Scott, ‘Growing Up in a Carolingian Monastery: Magister Hildemar and His Oblates’ *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983), pp. 36–59.

⁶⁰ The Tenth Council of Toledo (AD 656) prohibited the acceptance of children younger than ten years of age as oblates.

⁶¹ St. Bede was sent to the monastery of St. Peter at Wearmouth as a *puer oblatus* at the age of seven, as Bede himself wrote: ‘When I was seven years of age I was, by the care of my kinsmen, put into the charge of the reverend Abbott Benedict [Biscop] and then of Ceolfrith, to be educated. From then on I have spent all my life in this monastery, applying myself entirely to the study of the Scriptures; and, amid the

observance of the discipline of the Rule and the daily task of singing in the church, it has always been my delight to learn or to teach or to write.’ (*Ecclesiastical History*, volume 24, p. 567); cf. Calvin B. Kendall, ‘Bede and Education’, in DeGregorio, Scott (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 99–112, see pp. 100–101; Sharon M. Rowley, art. ‘Bede’, in Sian Echard and Robert Rouse (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp. 257–264, see 258. The fostering of children to monasteries for their education, especially from elite families, seems to have been common in both Ireland and amongst the Angles and Saxons in England, cf. Bertram Colgrave and Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. xx.

⁶² Cf. the proverb attributed to Rabbi Yehuda and often cited in Rabbinic literature: “He that does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to rob” (bKiddushin 29a).

⁶³ *Apology for the Jews* 11.13.

⁶⁴ *Jewish War*, 2.8.13 §160–161.

⁶⁵ Three Passover feasts are clearly found in the Gospel of John at 2:13, 6:4 and 11:55 (cf. 12:1, 12, 20; 13:1, 29; 18:28, 38; 19:14, 31, 42). Counting only these, the education of Jesus’ Galilean disciples clearly lasted more than two years. The feast of John 5:1 is indeterminate (‘one of the Jewish festivals’). Should this have been a Passover, Jesus’ education of his Galilean disciples lasted more than three years. Cf. August Strobel, *Ursprung und Geschichte des frühchristlichen Osterkalenders (Texte und Untersuchungen* 121, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1977), pp. 98–100, who argued that Jesus’ public ministry lasted more than three years; further Rainer Riesner, ‘3.2.5. The Duration of Jesus’ Ministry’, *Paul’s Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 47–48.